Pulpit

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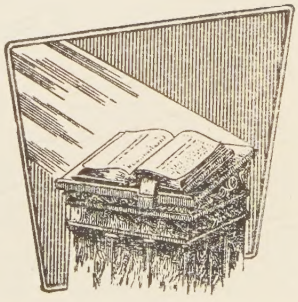
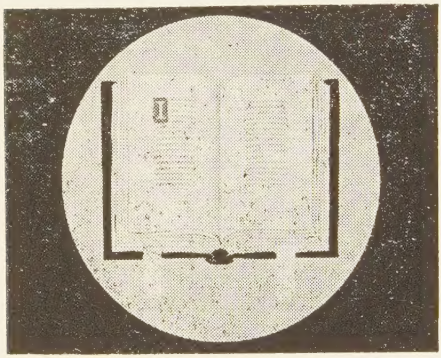


EDITORIAL COMMENTS

The themes in this issue center on Advent and Christmas emphases. The editors and publisher, even at this early date, extend their prayerful wish that the coming season of spiritual expectancy may bring joy and satisfaction to our many readers in the States, Canada, the British Isles, and far beyond.

Next month's topics will be "Hope for Sinners" and "New Year Perspectives." The January themes will be "Words for Anguished Lives" and "Lenten Pilgrimage."

SYMBOLS OF FAITH: THE OPEN BOOK



Friedrich Rest
United Church of Christ
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A few symbols stand out because of their simplicity. One of these is the Open Book, symbol of the Word of God. Sometimes added when it is desirable to signify verbal or complete inspiration of the Holy Scriptures are the letters V.D.M.A., or the entire sentence, "Verbum Dei Manet in Aeternum," which is, "The Word of the Lord abides for ever."

Other Christian symobls of the Word of God consist of a burning light, a candle, or a picture of two scrolls, the latter symbolical of both the Old and the New Testaments. In a Jewish setting, they refer to the Law and the Prophets. Originally symbolical of intelligence and learning, the old-type lamp has come to mean not only wisdom and knowledge, but the Word as a lamp for our feet as well.

The two tablets, symbolic of the Ten Commandments, are familiar to both Jews and Christians. Not so familiar, perhaps, is the doubleheaded lectern, with an open Bible on each face, symbolic of the Gospel and Epistle — a set of widely used Scriptural readings for the Church year.

In 1947, the Friendship Press published an unusually interesting book, **Great Is The Company** by Violet Wood. It is a very fascinating account of Bible translations.

The story in back of the "One-finger Bible," told on pp. 97-102, is appealing to me, for it recalls the great devotion and sacrifice of Schereschewsky, a Russian Jew who was led into the Christian faith by a New York Baptist minister, educated in an American Presbyterian Seminary, and later serving as an Episcopal bishop in China. He studied for a year and a half in China to prepare himself for the task of translating the Bible into Mandarin, as it was spoken

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Pulpit Preaching

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JOHN W. MEISTER
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Advent Highlights

THE TIMES OF REVEALING

John W. Meister, First Presbyterian Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana

And the Word became flesh. John 1:14.

PART ONE

A week or so before Christmas, a woman in an Eastern city telephoned a minister. She was in much agitation. She explained that she was chairman of an outdoor community Christmas tree lighting and was disturbed over the selection of the carols to be sung. She could not, she said, find just the right songs for such a function. "Most of the Christmas songs," she complained, "are too distressingly theological." The minister replied, "Well, after all, Christmas was a rather theological affair, wasn't it?"

Try as we will — and most of us wouldn't try — we cannot escape the theological implications of Christmas. However we seek to explain the first Christmas we involve God in our explanation — even if we attempt to deny he had anything to do with Jesus. The moment we involve God the matter becomes theological. Mature Christians, therefore, will include as part of their Christmas celebration the discipline of facing some of these theological implications head-on. Specifically, they will ask: What does the glad fact of Christmas tell us about God?

We have deliberately chosen the most "theological" text we can find: "And the Word became flesh." We admit that we cannot exhaust the truth contained in those five words, but we hope that we can turn them over in our minds until we grow in our understanding of God and man.

I

Words release power. "Words are cheap," we say. And well we might judge them so, for thanks to radio, television, newspapers, magazines and comic books, I suppose no group of people have heard so many words uttered to so little purpose.

Some years ago a preacher found himself stranded in a Michigan village between trains. The station-master recommended that the high school graduation might be a profitable place to send the time. Once there his eye fell on a banner proclaiming the class motto: "Deeds not words." We know the spirit which prompted the class to choose its motto. It is the same spirit which prompted Paul to remind the Corinthians that "the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power." These students felt the urge to be up and doing.

But this side of the matter ought not dull us to the truth that words are the most powerful of tools — and the right word is beyond all price. The wise preacher saw this other and truer side of the matter. Immediately he found himself thinking: "But words are deeds — as much deeds of the lips as the making of a table is a deed of the hands. Did not the Greeks say, By words alone are mortals swayed? Words are tools — terrible tools or beneficient tools — but tools. And even words born in the silence of the soul are among earth's mightiest tools — a brush to paint pictures, a chisel to carve motives, a battering-ram to break down walls of oppression, a compass to guide the traveler, a light to pierce the soul's gloom."

Whittier once wrote with great insight, "Each crisis brings its word and deed." This is true — whether the crisis be within our own soul or within the life of our world. We who have been privileged to live through these last twenty-five years have witnessed many crises and in each one we have not only seen the critical deed; we have also heard the saving word. That is to say, we have witnessed many demonstrations of the ability of words to release power.

I think of two such instances. One was in March 1933, when we heard a newly elected president say to a timid and trembling nation, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." I confess that I was one of the millions who wept at the sound of those words. And that phrase more than any single deed released the power of our nation to fight a common enemy with zest and courage and hope.

The other instance was in the dark days of 1940 and the spokesman was Winston Churchill. He was speaking to Britain but the rest of us listened in: "And now it has come to us to stand alone in the breach. . . . Bearing ourselves humbly before God, but conscious that we serve an unfolding purpose, we are ready to defend our native land. We are fighting by ourselves alone, but we are not fighting for ourselves alone. . . . Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say, 'This was their finest hour.'"

That word from the prime minister released the real power in the lives of Britishers which enabled them to endure triumphantly the most devastating struggle in their history.

But what has this to do with God and Christmas? Just this: When John beheld Jesus he realized that he was beholding the power of God being released through a person. Much as the power latent in a nation is released when the right word is spoken, so the power of God latent in men is released when they behold — truly behold — Jesus. God does not speak the English language in syllables audible to our ears, but he does speak the human language in the Person of Jesus. Jesus is God's Word become flesh! Jesus is what God has to say to the world! Jesus is God's final Word — final in the sense of being ultimate. There is nothing more God can say! Jesus is God's "Speech" to mankind.

Notice — for this is quite important — God's Word consists of what Jesus **is** quite as much as of what Jesus **said.** The Person of Jesus — what he is, plus the work of Jesus — what he did and does, plus the words of Jesus — what he said: these three taken together comprise the Word of God become flesh. Which means that if we would hear God in Jesus we must "enter into" Jesus. It is not enough to read his words. We "hear" God's Word in Jesus only when we are "in Christ" — saturated with him as an alcoholic is "in liquor" or a person is "in love."

II

To me the most exciting fact about the good news that God has spoken in Jesus is this: In Jesus God speaks to **every** human situation.

I once thought that God in Jesus had something to say in only some of the experiences of life. Life, I thought, could be broken down into compartments: some of life I could carry alone without any help from God in Jesus; some of life was too big for ever God in Jesus to do anything about! But the longer I live the more convinced I am that God in Jesus has something to say in every human situation — and that when we hear what he has to say his word releases power.

Let me indicate what I mean by two or three instances. Take the grim experience of losing someone we love in death. We stand beside a grief-stricken friend and we try to release their powers of hope and renewal. I

have long since learned that if we try to speak out of our own wisdom and experience our speaking is so much nervous chattering which does more to upset than it does to build up. But when we help them to behold God in Jesus the powers for getting a new grip on life are released. Who, for example, can behold God as these words reveal him and fail to feel the power of hope and new life being released within him: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. Wherefore comfort ye one another with these words."

Again, consider the universal experience of guilt. Who can go through a Christmas season when Love stoops so near our earth in ways that are not only sentimental but also beautiful and transforming without feeling painful twinges of guilt? We think of deeds of love we have not done the rest of the year. We realize how fortunate we are past all deserving. We remember our selfishness which has shut us off from life's main stream. Surely if God can speak to us at the point of our guilt he can speak to us anywhere.

And this he does — in Jesus. Trace the life of Jesus as we behold it in the New Testament and we find him meeting the very sins which haunt us. Do we feel guilty because of the way we have mishandled our money? Then read of this encounter with Zacchaeus and the rich young ruler. Do we feel guilty because of sex? Then read of his conversations with the woman taken in adultery, the woman at the well and harlot who visited him in Simon's home. Do we feel guilty because of secret hate and fear and pride? Then read of his many encounters with people who were crippled by their secret feelings of guilt. And we learn that with God there is forgiveness for us all!

But it is not a cheap forgiveness. It comes at the highest of prices. From us, God's forgiveness requires our forgiveness of others. Did not Jesus teach us to pray: "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us?" And from God's side the price is the cross.

If we would hear God's word of power in Jesus we had best behold him upon the cross. Jesus said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." He is truly lifted up only when he is hanging from the cross. This is the sign of the power God releases through him — the power of self-giving love. As Paul put it, "To us who are being saved the cross is the power of God."

"And the Word became flesh." Jesus is God's Word to us mortals — his word of power — his word which will release his power in us. And that power is the power of self-giving love — the power of the cross. In our adoration before the Crib let us keep our eyes upon the Cross which forever overshadows the Crib. Only so can his power within us be released to redeem the world.

PART TWO

"And the Word became flesh." If we could completely understand these five words — where they come from, what they meant to John as he wrote them, the implications of their meaning — if we could understand them in this complete sense then we "would know what God and man is." But it is not ours to understand this profound text so completely. The fixed gulf between the eternal God and us temporal men forever limits our understanding. Therefore, this sermon will be a "footnote" to the text — intended to illumine and to illustrate, not designed to describe and to delimit. Ours is more the approach of the poet, not of the critic or the logician.

In keeping with this approach, we have asked ourselves a single question: What is there about the nature

of words which led John to speak of Jesus as the "Word" of God? What is there about the very essence of words which justifies them as a symbol for the Eternal redemptivity at work in our world?

In reply to this question we have two answers. First, Words reveal personality. We are what we say. To be sure, we are not always what we say we are. In such an intsance, however, our words still reveal our personality for they show up the duplicity at the center of our soul. Jesus is the Word of God precisely because he reveals the personality of God. In unmistakable human terms, Jesus the Nazarene reveals the nature of God the Eternal One.

Words also release power. While we are inclined to consider words as one of the cheapest articles in this world's market place, upon deeper reflection we recognize them to be the indispensable tools of the commerce of our life. Whether we think of our private inner life, our personal relationships, or our social world, the principle is clear: "Each crisis brings its word and deed." And the saving word is always that word which releases power and enables us to con-of words which led John to speak of Jesus as the "Word" of God? What is there about the very essence of words front the crisis. Jesus is the Word of God precisely because he releases the power of God. When we truly hear him as he speaks not only through his recorded words but also through what he was plus what he did then he releases God's power within us.

Words also refract light. By "light" I do not mean, obviously, physical light — such as comes from the sun or an electric bulb. I mean the inner light which we think of as being within ourselves, especially within our minds. In common speech we refer to ignorance as "darkness" and to intelligence as "light." We have dubbed a period of history the "Age of Enlightenment" because during that period the minds of many men were "lighted up" in a new way. We instinctively think of truth in terms of light and are given to saying, "I just can't get him to see what I'm trying to say." In the passage where we find our text, John brings "light" and "life" close to meaning the same reality when he writes: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." What I am saying then is this: Our words refract that inner light within ourselves which is at once our personal truth and our distinctive life.

I

Now that we are agreed upon what we mean by "light," someone may be asking (at least I hope someone is asking!), Why say, "Words refract light"? Why not say, "Words reveal light," or "Words reflect light"? Why resort to this rather strange word, "refract"?

For this very good and simple reason: Our words do not reveal or reflect our own inner light. "Reveal" means literally "to take away the veil." If we reveal a hidden object we pull back the curtain for all to see it who will — and presumably they may see all there is of it.

"Reflect" means literally "to bend." The simplest illustration is the mirror or looking glass. A good mirror reflects the image of the one who peers into it, and to our discomfort it reflects all of the image with painful accuracy.

If we consider the matter for only a moment, we realize that our words neither reveal or reflect our inner light. Regardless of the precision with which we select our words, we seldom, if ever, completely reveal all that we mean or accurately reflect all that we intend. There is always something "left over" that we cannot find words to express. This is the reason we so frequently say, "I don't know whether you catch what I mean or not, but the nearest I can come to it is. . . ."

To put it another way, our communication is always imperfect. Even if we select our words with utmost care, which we don't, then the words we select mean one thing to us and

another thing to each person who hears them. So here we strike a profound paradox: if we cannot articulate the light we have — that is, if we cannot put it into words — then we do not really have that light; but regardless of our ability with words, we cannot completely and accurately articulate the light we really do have.

We see this paradox everywhere but no where more clearly than in a classroom. The student is asked a question and he squirms uneasily as he says, "I know the answer but I can't put it into words." The wise teacher replies, "If you can't put it into words you don't really know the answer." Both are right. Which is the reason I react with sympathy as well as with humour to the story of the Harvard student who wrote on his examination paper, "It is difficult to put into words ideas which one does not have."

II

If words do not **reveal** what we mean and do not **reflect** what we mean, what do words do? They refract the light we are attempting to share.

The word "refract" means literally "to break." The figure of speech I have in mind is familiar to every one of us — unforgettably familiar if we have ever taken a high school course in beginning physics. It is the figure of the prism. The typical prism is a long piece of solid glass, the ends of which are triangular. Almost every home has its share of prisms, however, in the crystals which hang at the base of chandeliers. If a prism is held in such a way that invisible light from the sun is permitted to pass through it, we discover that the prism breaks down the invisible light into its visible separate rays so that we see a pattern of light like a rainbow dancing before our eyes. This process of breaking down the light rays and dispersing them into separate colors from red to violet is called "refraction." The prism refracts light.

In something of the same way, our words refract the light within us. They are the prism through which we communicate what we know. Whether the light we own be clear as crystal or hazy as a cloud, if we let that light pass through our words it is broken down into recognizable, if not always understandable, fragments.

And please notice that the figure of a prism is a good one for this added reason: the best of prisms will not break down a ray of light in such a way that we can see all of its component rays. There is always much light left unseen. At the one end, for example, there are infra-red rays — too long for us to see and at the opposite end there are the ultraviolet rays — too short for us to see.

So it is with our words. However much of the truth we possess they break down into parts we can communicate, there is always much left unspoken because it cannot be said and unheeded because it cannot be heard.

Our words, then, refract whatever inner light we possess. They break down whatever we know into terms which can be transmitted to others and understood by them. But they never succeed in completely transmitting or accurately interpreting the light that is ours.

III

In some such way Jesus is the Word of God.

God is frequently referred to in the Scriptures in terms of light. In one of his letters, for example, John writes: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). In the beautiful and hopeful twenty-second chapter of the Revelation we read: "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." And exactly because God may be figuratively spoken of in terms of light, John could say, "No

one has ever seen God."

But Jesus is the Word of God because he refracts the light that is God. In his human life Jesus breaks down the invisible light of the Eternal One into particles we can see and understand. Indeed, he breaks down the Light that is God into some particles we cannot escape understanding! His life abides as a human rainbow keeping visible the spectrum of God we are privileged to behold. John not only said, "No one has ever seen God"; he rushed right on in the same sentence to add, "the only Son . . . has made him known."

Perhaps you are already recalling the dramatic scene in the Upper Room the night before the crucifixion. Jesus had just spoken of his Father's house of many mansions and had assured his disciples that where he is going there will be a place for them also. Thomas, in his typical fashion, then raised a question: "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus replied, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life . . . If you had known me, you would have known my Father also: henceforth you know him and have seen him."

At this point Philip pled, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied." And Jesus said: "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father."

A school teacher in the city of London is credited with writing these words: "I said to the man at the gate of the year, 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the darkness.' He said to me, 'Put your hand into the hand of God and walk bravely into the unknown. That will be for you better than a light and safer than a known way."

Because Jesus lived we can do just that. Did he not say, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life?"

LIGHT PUNCHERS

Glenn E. Hanneman, First Baptist Church, Los Angeles, California

It was a world where sensuality and immorality completely dominated the scene, where the lie was the mark of sophistication, and greed the keystone of ambition. It was a social climate in which the baser drives in a man were played upon, and he was drawn, as if by a magnet, into the clutches of a vicious evil. How, then was a Christian to make his way? If he participated in such a world, he could not retain his integrity — nor even his identify as a Christian. On the other hand, if he withdrew, and lived a life totally apart he could not fulfill his commission as a disciple. So the issue was drawn — full of complexities. And the problem was one of sufficient proportions that the writer of the letter to the Ephesians devoted a good deal of time to it.

In one sense, he was negative. "Of this much you can be quite certain: that neither the immoral nor the dirty-minded nor the covetous man has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God . . . It is these very things which bring down the wrath of God on the disobedient. Have nothing to do with men like that." In other words, these are some things to which a Christian must say "no!" — and with emphasis! They just can't be included in the way of life as Jesus taught it. They destroy the personality, and warp the soul.

But then he turned in another direction, with the word that was to effect a miracle. It was the means by which that society was changed. The Christian faith, which in those days had only a toe-hold on a precarious climb, reached the summit. Instead of withdrawing into an ivory tower where they would have affect-

d no one, the Christians drew others to themselves, and thereby to Christ; and their world was turned upside-down. It was the positive approach which effected the miracle: "Once you were 'darkness' but now you are 'light'! Live then as children of the Light."

This is the key to the Christian witness in any generation. No one who counts himself to be a follower of Christ can withdraw from the world without impoverishing both himself and the world. But he can — in fact, he must bring the Light of the Way of Christ with all its winsomeness and joy and meaning and hope to bear on the darkness. Even a little light dispels the great darkness. "Live then as children of the Light." This is our commission. How then, shall we witness in our day and generation?

I

In the first place, I suggest that because of our faith, we need to bring our generation a word of **confidence** in the loving purposes of God. No one can live today without awareness of the tension and the critical nature of almost every decision that is being made among the nations. We would be totally naive if we did not face up to the fact of the danger which surrounds every one of us. And yet, who, more than a Christian, has reason to balance out that perspective with the deep faith that God is at work, effecting His will in the world, bringing good even out of the most evil? There is so much evidence of that fact.

All of nature supports the idea. In Walt Disney's excellent film "The Secrets of Life," we are shown some pine cones which are so made by God that they canot open and drop their seeds unless they are subjected to intense heat. Therefore, they do not produce unless a forest fire has come along to open them. God makes sure that the forest will be re-seeded. All through nature, there is the silent miracle of recurring life. Man cannot make it so, but God can — and does! Even when the world — or man — has done his worst, God is the ruler yet, working to bring about life, making His will known!

Certainly history supports this fact. The Roman Empire was a vast imperialism, cruel, selfish, and bloody. But God used Rome for an overriding of racial and national boundaries, a unifying of the known world, and a creative building of law and order, to which we are still incalculably indebted. The French Revolution was a terrible thing too, with the carts rolling down Parisian streets carrying political captives to the guillotine, and heads rolling by the dozens every hour of the day. And yet God made use of that, to help democracy and the dignity of man to emerge from the darkness and bring light and hope in the world to this day. History teaches us to hope! For when man has done his worst, God is the ruler yet, working to bring about life, and making His will known.

If anyone has cause for hope in this world, Christians ought, most of all. For it was out of the blackness and despair of death and defeat that God raised the crucified Christ from death into life, and turned darkness into light. This is the most important fact of history. It was God **at work** in the world; effecting His will, fulfilling His own purpose for man. When man had done his worst, God transformed even that into light and hope.

My second suggestion is that we reaffirm the way of the cross as our instrument of hope in God. Now obviously this will never be a popular concept. We do not like crosses. We like comfort, and convenience, congenial company, security. We would rather, as it were, keep that cross high and lifted up — look at it from afar off, and substitute cushions in its stead. But the world has not been pushed forward by men who have chosen the cushion instead of the cross. It has been made what it is

by men and women who have believed in something far more important than their own personal comfort and convenience, and peace of mind, who as Christians have carried the cross of loving concern into the areas of man's need which have been opened up to them. It is at this point only that the Christian witness takes on power. It is what Albert Schweitzer calls "reaching out beyond ideas to people!"

For a long time the feeling has been growing in me that we in America have been perverting the Christian religion. What do we come to church for? To get a lift? To get help for our problems? To get peace of mind? To be soothed and comforted? Yes. But much more! We need to understand that our true salvation is not fulfilled until we begin following Jesus Christ into active concern and service in His name. The men and women who have most deeply believed are not those who have discovered some falacious comfort at the heart of their faith! They have found a deep seriousness at the heart of life! A cross! As Dr. Fosdick has put it, "God is demanding and He can be the most exacting personage in the world!" And He is constantly seeking those who will take their faith seriously enough to be useful!

The hope of the world has not grown out of the comforts of the Upper Room. It has risen out of the Cross on Calvary. God sent His Son, as His way with man, that we might know the truth, and thereby be set free. But God's way for man was revealed as His Son carried the cross that all the world might be lifted up.

Christ does not call us to comfort! Our Lord is literally demanding of those who would follow Him that they should be willing to put a rope around their necks if necessary; that they should be ready for anything; that they should deny themselves in all things to carry that cross of love and concern into the needs of this world. This is an appeal to heroes! Nathan Schaeffer has written: "At the close of life, the question will not be, how much have you got, but how much have you given; not how much have you won, but how much have you done; not how much have you saved, but how much have you sacrificed; not how much were you honored; but how much have you loved and served?" The world is in need of such witness! "Once you were 'darkness' but now you are 'light.' Live then as children of the Light."

Late in life, a great sickness came upon Robert Louis Stevenson, and he was forced to spend many months in bed. One night he was in his room alone, when he was heard calling frantically, "Nurse, nurse, come in here! Then he said, "That lamplighter out there, coming down the hill touching each lamp with the magic wand . . . He is punching holes in the dark." This is the challenge confronting us who compose the church of Christ today.

These are precarious days in which we live, of course. Black with the clouds of uncertainty and unrest. But all the more reason for Christian people to exert greater effort to bring the light of love and peace and understanding to the world. When the world is at its worst, we must be at our best! Therefore let us speak the word of confidence — that God is the ruler yet, that there is cause for hope in His loving purposes. Let us dare to believe in God's way for man enough to take up our crosses if needed. Confidence and a cross. This is our witness. The world is in a great darkness. But God is light. "Live then as children of the Light."

HE BOOK GOD WROTE

Armin C. Oldsen, St. Paul Evangelical Luthern Church, Lakewood, Ohio

All scripture is given by the inspiration of God. 2 Timothy 3:16

Last year on Bible Sunday the Los ngeles Times printed a thought-pro-oking cartoon. It shows a man com-rtably seated in an overstuffed air, facing a book case with sev-al hundred volumes. Evidently the an does not see anything that would terest him because he is saying to mself, "Wish I knew a good book read." If that were all that is in e cartoon it would still be signifi-nt in pointing out how unsatisfied e can be with the wisdom of the orld. The cartoonist undoubtedly as aware of the fact that the learn-g of the ages can at times seem in and unprofitable. He offered a lution to the boredom of living. ithin an arm's length of the man ho is tired of reading the best oughts of his fellow men lies an used copy of the Holy Bible, but seemingly is unaware of its pres-ce.

Don't you think that is an apt pres-tation of the plight of modern man? e is sick and tired of listening to e pronouncements of learned men, ho may be authorities in their field special interest, but who cannot swer satisfactorily life's most ur-nt questions. He wants to know hat a man can really believe, what can hope for, and how he can ve meaningfully. Right at his elbow s the Book God Wrote with all e answers to life's greatest ques-ns, but for the most part modern an ignores it and says wistfully, Vish I knew a good book to read. ne that would give me a real pur-se for living."

I

Almost nineteen hundred years ago e Apostle Paul was writing to his ung friend Timothy. Paul lived in topsy-turvy world like ours and he ad done some serious thinking about ig things like life and man and the world and God. He had come to a clear and blessed understanding of the meaning of life and of his own relation to God. God had revealed eternal truth to him. Paul in turn had instructed Timothy in the great spiritual truths that he had embraced by faith. In describing the future to the young man whom he dearly loved, Paul said something that would make good copy for an editorial page in tomorrow's newspaper. "Perilous times are coming," he wrote. "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof . . . ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Isn't that a remarkably apt delineation of our times with all the advance in education and all the progress in practically every field of human endeavor: "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"?

Paul had a suggestion, "Timothy, while the world is being shaken to pieces, cling to the Book That God Wrote." He said in the third chapter of his Second Epistle to Timothy, "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Timothy had learned them from his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois when he was still a small boy. "That from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The Holy Scriptures, Paul assured Timothy, you can de-

pend on, for they are the Book That God Wrote. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God."

Many elaborate theses have been written and many learned sermons have been preached — and some not so learned — that have sought to prove by arugmentation that the Bible is the Book That God Wrote. Christ was satisfied to call the Bible "The Word of God" and to let it go at that. He made no attempt to prove God and He made no attempt to prove that the Bible is the Word of God. The Bible itself does not try to prove that there is a God. It does not begin with a chapter entitled, "You Ought to Believe in God Because." God is so obvious that the Bible opens with the sentence, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." And the Bible does not seek to prove that it is the Book God Wrote. To one who has studied the Bible carefully and prayerfully its divine origin is so apparent that it is enough to have Paul say, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," and to have Peter state, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And if there is any doubt about it, Paul writes also, "We speak, not in the words which men's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

II

One might expect that the Book God Wrote would be praised and recommended by the best and noblest of men. In every generation great men have lauded the Bible and millions have joined the Psalmist in singing, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Quotations from the lips and pens of men and women from every worthy walk of life, extolling the Bible, would fill many volumes. Let me repeat three of them. William E. Gladstone, outstanding British statesman of the last century, said, "I have known ninety-five of the world's great men in my time, and of these eighty-seven were followers of the Bible. . . . The Bible is stamped with a Specialty of Origin, and an immeasurable distance separates it from all competitors." Daniel Webster, one of the greatest of American statesmen, proclaimed, "If there is anything in my thoughts or style to commend, the credit is due to my parents for instilling in me an early love of the Scriptures." One sentence from the writings of Webster might fittingly be printed in the masthead of every paper in the country: "If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity." Sir William Herschel, Anglo-American astronomer, gave us a word that would be appropriate over the entrance of every school, factory, and laboratory in the world: All human discoveries seem to be made only for the purpose of confirming more and more strongly the truths contained in the Sacred Scriptures."

One might expect that the Book That God Wrote would be investigated and bitterly criticized by small men. It certainly has been so treated. No book in all the world has ever been so violently hated and so vehemently denounced. It is most significant that some of those who claim it is ridiculous to believe that the Bible is the Word of God, will devote great sums of money and much time and energy trying to prove that they are right, when they would simply ignore a book in astronomy or philosophy, with which they did not agree. No book in all the world has ever been so ruthlessly attacked as the Book God Wrote, and no book in all the world has ever stood up so gloriously under attack.

One might expect that the Book God Wrote would be profound and beyond the full grasp of mere man. It certainly is that. Some of the wisest men in the world have devoted a

lifetime of sincere and scholarly study o the Bible; have with the passing lf many hours of reading and medi- ation come to an always clearer un- erstanding of its more difficult pas- ages; and have at the end been nore ready than ever before to ex- laim with the Apostle Paul, "O the epth of the riches both of the wis- om and knowledge of God! How nsearchable are His judgments, and lis ways past finding out!"

One might expect that the Book God Wrote would be simple enough hat the creatures for whom it was written could understand it. It is. In pite of its unfathomable depth, the ssential truths presented in the Bi- le are so clear and simple that a ittle child can grasp them. A child an understand something of the maj- sty, the power, the wisdom, and the ove of God. A child can appreciate nan's relationship to the world; the world is so great and man is so puny. A child can understand something of he evil of sin, how it offends God, ow it angers God, how God will unish it. A child can appreciate God's fatherly concern for his wel- are, especially the forgiveness of sins or Jesus's sake. A child can be stirred y its eternal destiny in heaven with God through Christ after it has by aith lived a life of service to God nd his neighbors.

One might expect that the Book God Wrote would appeal to men of very clime and every color. It cer- ainly does that. It is known in every ountry of the world. It has been ranslated into every important liv- ng language and into hundreds of ialects. Men, women, and children— hose who work on the farm or in the actory; those who dwell in tents or n tenement houses; those who live n the slums or on the gold coast; hose whose names are lengthened by ll kinds of academic degrees and hose who can scarcely read or write; hose who are just beginning the ourney of life and those who are bout to put aside its burdens for- ever — will find in the Bible the same inspiration, the same comfort, the same guidance, and the same high hope of heaven through Christ the Savior.

One might expect that the Book God Wrote would be timeless in its appeal to the people of every genera- tion. It certainly is that. From the day that the Children of Israel cher- ished the Bible in its infancy, carry- ing it about with them in the ark of the covenant and keeping it in the Holy of Holies of their great temple in Jerusalem, to this moment, wher- ever there are Christian people it has always been found to be as up to date as this morning's newspaper. God's Book faces the main issues of life, which never change, as they real- ly are and it has the same hopeful and helpful message for the bewil- dered man of today, whose life is harassed by complex world problems, as it had for the unlettered and un- sophisticated man of yesterday, whose problems scarcely ever went beyond the boundaries of the little village in which he was born and in which he lived and died.

One might expect that the Book God wrote would constantly be at the head of the best seller lists. It is that. In fact, so consistently does the Bible lead all other books in number of sales that most publishers do not bother to report them when the best best seller lists are compiled.

III

One might imagine that the Book God Wrote would be avidly read by everyone who can obtain a copy. It is not. While there undoubtedly are thousands of Christians the world over for whom the Bible is a source of daily strength and guidance, there are other thousands who regard themselves as children of God, and who have expensive copies of God's Book, but who never read it. It was my privilege some years ago to have dinner in one of the finest homes of the community with one of the best families of the local church. After

the meal the father asked for the Bible that he might conduct brief family devotions. One did not have to be a mind reader to realize that the family was about to have an unusual experience. The head of the family had difficulty finding an appropriate passage in the unused Book and finally announced, almost in desperation that he would read the first chapter of Matthew, the opening of the New Testament. I hope you are aware of the fact that more than the first half of that chapter is devoted to the genealogy of Christ. It is a long list of names that is more difficult to read than the telephone directory. What should have been a few inspiring moments turned out to be a most embarrassing experience. That is not to say that one should be well acquainted with his Bible so that he can make a good impression on the minister. This is the point of the story. Think of how profoundly distressing it must be to God to know that many of those who call themselves His children — children who today need all the spiritual guidance and inspiration they can get — simply do not read the Book He wrote for them. Today the Bible can be read in readily understandable translation and books with helps and suggestions for Bible reading are available for anyone.

During the last war, as the chaplain in the army was distributing small copies of the New Testament to the men who were moving to the front, one chap accepted the little book because he had heard that it pages were the right size and of fair quality for rolling cigarettes. And that is what he used it for, page after page of it. There came a day when he found himself isolated in a foxhole, alone with God; his friends were retreating and the enemy was advancing. There are no atheists in foxholes, you remember, so he tried rather awkwardly to speak to him. He remembered the New Testament — that is, what was left of it. He began to read at the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of Saint John, the consoling words of Christ, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me." The foxhole became a kneeling bench where the prodigal confessed, "Father, I have sinned in heaven and in Thy sight and am not worthy to be called Thy son." And the foxhole became the place where a lost soul found its way back to God through faith in Christ the Savior by means of a few pages from the Book God Wrote.

Sooner or later we all find ourselves in foxhole situations. Inevitably there will come a time when friends will be retreating and death will be coming on. Blessed are they for whom the Book God Wrote is an old and well-known friend, who can say of the Bible what Peter said, namely that it is "a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawn and the day star rise in our hearts."

BUT WE SEE JESUS!

Aaron N. Meckel, First Congregational Church, St. Petersburg, Florida

My golf partner put down his clubs long enough the other day to say, "Why are we Americans so hot and bothered about what the Soviets are doing?"

My friend did not mean that we should be indifferent to the course of world events. What he meant was this: Has the Kremlin thrown us off our guard? and into a paroxysm of fear? Are we losing sight of the spiritual grandeur of our own heritage?

After all, this is not the first time the pretensions of Caesar have been abroad in the world. The century in which Christianity was born was, to all intents, one of blood, steel, and iron — a world in the relentless grip of the demonic. And there were those who looked on fearfully.

But there were those others who looked on with eyes that faith had opened. What those first Christians saw is fortunately recorded for us in the second chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews of our New Testament. Indeed, they saw One who had been put to death on a Cross, the symbol of shame and weakness, but who is now crowned with glory and honor, seated at God's right hand! In that sinister and topsy-turvy era they had one sure center of stability. In their own words: "But we see Jesus, made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, (now) crowned with glory and honor" (Heb. 2:9). This suffering and exalted Jesus became the focal center of their hope. They saw everything in Him. All creation was reborn in Him. In the words of Robert Browning,

That One Face, far from vanish,
rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Becomes my universe that feels
and knows.

Had those first Christians been living in our time, I believe they would have said, "Get your faith into focus! Lift your gaze up to Him! Above all —look at Jesus!"

In practical terms, what is the meaning of all this for those of us who, frankly, have lost hope? Much, I believe, in every way.

I

Provided my gaze rests on Him, this suffering but triumphant Christ **becomes the center of my universe of moral values.** He is my spiritual criterion, my moral lode star. In the midst of the moral miasma about me I look up and see Jesus.

I need hardly tell you how much we need Him today. Much of our modern ethics are spiritually off center. We have lost sight of the absolutes, if indeed we still believe there are such. Our most cherished values are in flux. Whirl is king, having driven out Zeus! Our youth are asking, Who will show us any good? False gods crowd our modern pantheon, even as they did in that early Graeco-Roman world out of which out text comes. Venus, Bacchus, Mars, Apollo are abroad in human society. It is almost axiomatic that when people no longer accept the revelation of God in Jesus Christ they fashion gods after their own image. That was the idolatry of ancient Israel — and it is ours.

Not so, however, for the Christian, the man whose eyes God has opened. Above ethical and secular confusion he sees his Lord. He walks by a light not his own. He has a Guide along the way. In our beautiful hymn, "Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me," we sing out our faith:

Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rock and treach'rous
shoal;
Chart and compass came from
Thee,
Jesus, Savior, pilot me.

And He does.

An old music master, so the story goes, had trouble keeping his students on key. Occasionally he would strike the tuning fork he kept close at hand, and exclaim: "A is A. Now let's get back to A."

One of our lads in the Armed Forces wrote home, "When my values are in danger of slipping, I think of Jesus and He brings me through."

That same resource is open to us all. In a human society where many of our values are in eclipse we can lift our gaze and say, "But we see Jesus."

II

Again, I find myself "looking unto Jesus" in the attempt to grasp **the meaning of history.** I see Him in the clash of men, nations, civilizations. Actually, history makes no sense or meaning apart from Him. The little schoolboy was closer to the truth than he meant to be when he wrote in an examination paper: "The Armistice was signed on the 11th of November, 1918, and since then every year there have been two minutes of

peace!" To the outward eye history, at best, is a "tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

But he who will look with faith-anointed eyes sees something else. In Christ he sees the emergence of a new pattern of events, the coming into being of a new and redeemed humanity. In a very real sense history, seen through Christian eyes, is seen as the **action** of Almighty God.

Those first Christians looked upon that chaotic, careening world of their day and held steady. All things were not yet subject to God's control — but they saw Jesus. This Christ is the One in whom the Kingdom of God has come to earth. In Him the Kingdom of God is personalized, and among them. He is the guarantee that God's ultimate victory shall be won, and His reign established on earth. To use a military figure, in Jesus Christ and the mighty events which cluster about Him, **God reveals His line of march.** Beyond Caesar there is Jesus. Above events there looms **the Event.** Be sure of your center and you will not fear the margin.

That, in substance, is what a great Christian scholar like Professor John Baille is saying in his book **The Belief In Progress.** The future belongs to Christianity! There is no place for hope in pagan thought, for **there** history is cyclic and treadmill. It rises and falls with your Gibbons and Spenglers.

But in Jesus Christ the movement of events becomes rectilinear. In Him history really "gets going!" There is an eternal purpose which God purposes in His Son (Eph. 3:11). The New Testament celebrates a victory already won, and speaks of a Christ who **already** reigns as Lord.

Bishop Gerald Kennedy reminds us of the comment of Winston Churchill on a speech of Hitler's. In his speech Hitler wonders why so few applaud his triumphs. Look at the victories he has won, the countries he has invaded, the thousands, if not millions, he has taken captive or murdered, the booty he has gathered. How, in the face of all this can the Allies be so hopeful? Churchill undertakes to reply to this query of history's leading Madman in one blistering sentence: "He sees with chagrin and amazement that our defeats are but stepping-stones to victory, and that his victories are only the stepping-stones to ruin."

Events, as we see them now, assume a rather somber aspect. But in the midst of darkness we see One like unto the Son of Man. Although we see not yet all things subject to Him, nevertheless we do see Jesus.

III

Yet again I see Him in the effort to grasp **the meaning of God for my life,** and for the lives of my fellowmen. What we see in Jesus, Dr. J. B. Phillips assures us, is "the focused God" of time and space. And this is the incredible Good News, that the same Jesus who walked the country lanes of ancient Judea and Galilee is alive and active in the world today.

What I see then, as I look at Him, is not only Jesus Christ, the center of my universe of moral values, and the inner meaning and significance of human history; but the One by whom faith lays hold on God the Father. What a Christ indeed!

Mere theological speculation **about** Him can be very misty. We cannot argue, or read, or even reason our way to certainty. When, after a lecture on the existence of God, a college professor asked his students if his meaning were clear, one of them replied, "Yes, Professor, as clear as mud!"

Our spiritual forbears had Stoicism, Gnosticism, Sophism, Epicureanism, among other other isms, to contend with. In our day we have Neo-Orthodox-ism, Existentialism (which everyone talks about but few understand!), Pragmatism, to mention but a few. Ours is an "ismic" era!

But this authentic voice out of the Christian past insists that we can lift

our gaze and see, through the mists, the outline of a Face. That this Face has the love and smile of the Father upon it. That we in our time can give the knowledge of God to others because we have seen it writ large on the Face of Christ (II Cor. 4:6). **"But we see Jesus."**

Someone asked Ralph Waldo Emerson to explain Christianity. He replied that such an explanation was impossible but that he could point his inquirer to a living embodiment of Christianity, Phillips Books.

Dr. Alexander Maclaren once had a famous skeptic in his congregation who promised to join his church if he could convince him of the existence of God. The learned preacher gave a series of messages designed to convince this man. At the end of the series this former skeptic, now a believer, expressed his desire to make a personal confession of faith and unite with the church. The sermons, he admitted, had been very helpful. But what convinced him, above everything else, was the Light of Christ reflected on the face of a little invalid woman he had assisted from the church on a previous Sunday. She had looked at his troubled countenance and then witnessed to him out of her own abounding and radiant faith in God. That Sunday afternoon he had knelt down at his bedside, and given his heart — and mind — to Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, the touchstone of my world of values, standing at the crossroads of history, but **above all else**, the commanding reality of my own soul. That way lies certainty. Only so does He become "my Universe that feels and knows."

Are **you** confused and upset in your thinking? Is your world out of joint? Then get your eyes on Him, until you see what those God-empowered men and women of yesterday saw. And then go out and shout it to every one you meet: "But we see Jesus — crowned with glory and honor."

WORTH QUOTING

E. Paul Hovey, Congregational-Presbyterian Church, Lewiston, Idaho

Christian Solution

The optimist asserts that woes
Suffice to "keep one on one's toes."
Let me be one one who disagrees —
My problems keep me on my knees.

Mildred R. Bensmiller in "Front Rank"

* * *

It was high praise which Jesus gave to the woman who broke a jar of precious perfume to anoint him. He said, "She hath done what she could." It may not seem, at first glance, a great thing to praise. It may seem an ordinary thing to do what one can. But that is very often the very thing people will **not** do. They think of what they would do if things were different, if they had a million dollars, or a place of great power. But such reveries count for nothing. What does count is what you **can** do, not the million dollars we do not have, but the ten dollars we **do** have, the influence we can exert with what we have.

Halford E. Luccock

* * *

Gerald Johnson published a suggestive commentary on the first half of the twentieth century under the striking title, "Incredible Tale." The book itself dealt with the political education of the average American citizen through the events of our times . . . The idea of its title was suggested by some words of Aeschines in 330 B.C. — "What is there in the list of strange and unexpected events that has not occurred in our time? Our lives have transcended the limits of humanity; we are born to serve as a theme of incredible tales

to posterity." Johnson's . . . choice of this phrase as a description of our own history since 1900 seems little less than a stroke of genius.

J. McDowell Richards in "Theology Today"

* * *

In the cyclotron of our time, the bombardment of the atom that is the human soul must go forward as never before in human history. More and more its power is the answer to the twin challenges of salvation in this world and the next: from the platform as it relates to government; from the pulpit as it relates to religion.

Governor Pyle

* * *

A man's religious beliefs shape his politics, social connections, recreations, commerce and practices, and these convictions determine his morals and his future.

J. Sidlow Baxter

* * *

Institutions tend to become formalized and ofttimes symbols become more important than what they symbolize. It happens when we install crosses all over; on the altar, to be sure, but also on doors and doorknobs, on steeples, in windows, on pew ends, on hymnbooks, in light fixtures — everywhere. Such use of the cross is no substitute for carrying it. In a sense it is a form of hypocrisy. We would do better to display it less and practice it more. We would certainly lose some members. Our income would shrink markedly. But our effectiveness would be vastly augmented. And possibly we might be instrumental in saving ourselves and our society.

Stanley U. North

* * *

The Bible is here to point us to God, to lay bare our need, to tear away our pretenses, to tell what God has done in history to save men, to tell us chiefly of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, to call us to faith in him, to comfort and sustain us in our life of faith and obedience, to give us words and guidance for our worship, to stir our imagination and strengthen our wills so that we may see our duty and do it with a willing heart, to enable us to be steady and courageous and so to face the future with hope.

Floyd V. Filson

* * *

The motion picture, "A Face in the Crowd," attempts to say something about our society as well as to entertain us. It is the story of "Lonesome Rhodes," a guitar-playing, wisecracking tramp who is catapulted to fame. . . . A politician running for the presidency is pretty easily persuaded that all he needs to win is to have Lonesome on his side. Lonesome loves his fame, his power, but not his public. He has contempt for the people, the very ones he can make believe, or do, anything. But Lonesome topples from his throne. . . The picture says, all of us are responsible for picking Lonesome's face out of the crowd. It also says that it's important for us (the crowd) to know what kind of public figures we really want. In other words, it would be well for us to be selective. For, after all, our entertainers — indeed, all our public figures — mirror us.

Richard H. Rice

A window does two things. In daytime it lets the light in. At night it lets the light out. A vital Christian is like that. In the day when God's light is shining, he lets God's light into his spirit. Such a time is public worship when the light of God is being dispensed . . . when God fills the Christian once again with power and zeal.

But at night when the lights of the world have gone out, a window lets light out. And when the lights of faith or hope go out around him, the Christian's light shines through to give courage and inspiration to others around him.

But what if our windows are dirty? . . . Clogged with prejudice against

our fellow man? . . . Smudged with pride and arrogance? . . . God's light under such circumstances has a hard time shining through.

God needs clear windows today. He needs Christians whose attitudes and approaches to life have been cleansed of prejudice, pride, arrogance, and selfish ambition. He needs clear windows into which his light can shine in during the day — and shine out during the night.

Edward DeWeese, Jr.

* * *

It is not conformity in the outward signs which represents the danger; it is conformity in thought and in thinking.

Crawford H. Greenewalt

* * *

In the Bible, Apollos is the scriptural example of learning, consecrated and alive with intellectual enthusiasm. Apollos was at home with the aristocracy of the intellect. He began his spiritual life at the baptism of John, but went on into the fuller knowledge of an intimate personal experience with Jesus Christ.

Paul was the tent-maker, zealous and active. When the Damascus road experience changed his direction, he achieved a wisdom that grows in grace.

So Paul and Apollos had two things in common — the kingdom of Jesus Christ and their dedication to it. Because of their devotion, God gave the increase to their joint labors. This genius of the gospel accounts for the humble and simple who become mighty, and for the mighty who become mightier . . . Give to God the consecration of the life, however humble or however exalted, and he will surely supply the increase.

Raymond M. Veh

* * *

Ways of making mountain peaks serve as radio booster stations are now common knowledge to radio engineers. That which makes this possible is known as "obstacle gain."

It was discovered by military operators during the Korean War. The discovery was that a signal could be sent direct from one valley to another, even though a peak stood in the way . . . When a signal . . . hits a suitable peak, it reradiated in all directions . . . "Obstacle gain" is not a reasonably sounding name for any situation. But when we think it through, it has much reason on its side. We encounter obstacles all our lives, and we know that but for many of them we would not grow in stature, in wisdom and in skill. The psalmist was impressed with this fact when he cried: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." . . . Aldous Huxley in the spirit of turning obstacles into "obstacle gain" asserts: "Experience is not what happens to a man. It is what man does with what happens to him."

J. Marvin Rast

* * *

The world . . . has formed a habit of thinking in groups . . . masses; and civilization is breaking down under the burden of that error . . . Birth and death are solitary, thought and growth are solitary; every final reality of man's life is his alone . . . As soon as he ceases to be alone, he moves away from realities.

Charles Morgan in "The Fountain"

* * *

Limitations — we agree in complaining about them. If there were not so many, we could accomplish so much! Could we? Would we really want to live in a world without limitations? "Limitations are indispensable," says J. B. Charles. "A river exists by its channel; a house by its walls. Normal body growth depends on the limitation of cell growth. Democracy and world peace are possible only where there are limitations upon the will to power. Intelligent

(Continued on page 32)

THE NEWS AND THE EVENT

Phillips Packer Elliott, First Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, New York

Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:11.

All through the Christmas story one alternates between the news and the event itself. It was, of course, news of the very highest order. "Good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people" — this was the nature of the news which the angels brought. We are always eager to have news of what is going on. The newspaper is a permanent feature of American life, supplemented now by news commentators on radio and television. We feel an awareness of world affairs because of the excellent way in which the great news services bring together reports from all the globe. Indeed, some people are eager to get even more details than the usual organs supply, and so they subscribe to special services which claim to get "the news behind the news," to give the inside story of affairs which are only hinted at or even ignored in the ordinary channels of information.

But important as all this is, it still lacks something essential, namely the authority of a first-hand experience. It is refreshing to get behind all news, and finally find oneself at the event itself, as one goes from the account of a great event, tragic or constructive, in the columns of a newspaper, and suddenly confronts the actual happening in all its starkness or in all its grandeur. Then one can make his own estimate and give his own report. At Christmas time we not only hear the news but go and see for ourselves what it is that has taken place, about which such good tidings have been brought.

I

Many things conspire to keep us away from the real events of life. Like the lazy man who loves to sit in his chair reading the paper by the hour, and thus getting a false sense of participation in world affairs, so with most people there is a fear of becoming involved which leads them to keep at arm's length from many of the situations of which they read and hear. It is easier to be a "reporter" than it is to be a participant; it is easier to be a spectator than a player in the game. So comes about the familiar attitude of our time — of thinking of oneself as outside life, and therefore a bit superior to it, reading about it, commenting upon it, looking at it with eyes either of pity or scorn, and in general refusing to become too involved in it all. Sometimes this affords a real protection and has a certain justification. To see one's pain and trouble with a certain objectivity is to dull it somewhat, and to ask "How will this look ten years from now?" is sometimes to put a problem in its proper perspective and keep it from overwhelming us.

But all this leads to an atmosphere of unreality about one's life. One is forever "quoting" what he has read or heard, and never telling of what he has actually experienced and felt. Will Rogers used to say, "All I know is what I read in the papers," and then go on with his humorous comments on the affairs of the day's news. Many people quite seriously know little or nothing else. Even

heir own emotions have become unreal, and they respond with joy or sorrow, enthusiasm or anger, according to the prompting of the newspaper they read and the slant its writers take, much as the audience in a radio studio responds loyally to the sign "laughter" and gives out the sounds which grate so harshly on the ear of the distant listener beside his instrument. We live in a world of "word-emotions," emotions where the most extravagant phrases are brought out to describe the most insignificant articles, and the noblest words are bidden to adorn the most trivial events. Most experiences of life are only half-felt and half-lived; life is news and not much more, good news, bad news, but still only a report of what is happening to our time and to ourselves. We are not sure what to think or say or even be until we have been given some help by the paper or the commentator.

II

Now the Christmas experience is not only news; it is also an event. One can hear about it as did the shepherds in the field near Bethlehem; or one can go, as did they, and see what has taken place, and experience the emotions of the occasion. It is not easy actually to enter into the Christmas experience, of course. The actual event took place almost twenty centuries ago, in a culture and place utterly unlike our own. How can this possibly be made real? Even the news about it, the story of it, has been told so often that it does not make much impression upon us, jaded as we are with other news of a world-shaking nature. It is far easier to read about Christmas than to experience it, and even the reading about it is not always very intense or real.

Morever, this is an inner and not an outer experience. It takes place within our emotions. We are to try to feel what has happened, not simply to read about it and evaluate it from the standpoint of its place in the news. The inner world of man is a difficult world, and it is not easy for him to incorporate into his emotional life this event which is so remote in time, so different in general setting, and so demanding upon his will and devotion.

III

How then shall we get behind the news to the event itself? **In the first place,** by realizing that this is an experience which is meant for me. The angels sang, "There is born to you this day — a saviour." One feels such a gift must be intended for someone else. There is a natural inferiority complex which afflicts us all. Anything really important in life is destined for another person, not for me. We are fated to remain in the shallows of life, to stay in the fringes of important activities and enterprises. Christmas happens — but it does not really happen to me. It takes place — over there.

But some things do happen to me, I will admit that. I am not completely ignored by experience. The papers may not mention me, and what I do all through my life may seem quite incidental; but at least I have known joy and sorrow, I have felt defeat and victory, I have known evil and I have known good. If I am honest with myself I know that I am really in the mainstream of life; that its great experiences strike me as directly and as fully as they strike any one.

So at Christmas time I am in the main stream. This too is for me. It is as direct, as personal, as anything that happens to me. It does not belong to any one else more than it does to me. There is no other person, no other group of persons, no race, nation or kindred, to whom this is intended more than it is intended for me. If I miss out on the Christmas experience it is because I do not receive what is available for me. Whatever Christmas means, it means to me, or can mean for me, if I will only let it. To no one is it intended to mean more than to me, this is "for all peo-

ple," and in the company of folk about the cradle I will find my proper place, will feel at home, and will know that I belong. The event of Christmas is an experience which is meant for me;; I am not just to read about it or to hear about it, but I am to know it for myself.

IV

In the second place, Christmas becomes an event as I determine to get to the very heart of the matter, and find out what is really there. When one visits the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem one is taken behind the choir screen and down some stairs to the grotto where, tradition has it, Christ was born. Even then one has not quite reached the spot, but must get down on his knees, and reach his arm into a hole in the floor, and there touch a star in the stone, which is the very spot where the nativity occurred. The most valuable part of the experience is the fact that one must go on and on until he reaches the very center, and feels that he has touched the sacred spot itself. No reports are needed now, no one need tell us what took place at Bethlehem – for one knows for himself; this is the very place.

So with the whole Christian experience. One must persevere in getting to the center of it all. One must use all his faculties to see what is taking place. One must be his own recorder and reporter. The shepherds took that method. They were not ordered to go to Bethlehem. They were not even invited to go, except implicity by the angels' description of the way they would find the babe—"wrapped in swaddling colthes and lying in a manger." The decision was their own. "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." One cannot imagine what would be the effect of the nativity story today if the shepherds had heard the news, but had not troubled to witness the event. The story comes to us with such authentic power because the shepherds not only heard the tidings, but also shared in the event itself. It was that that counted most – the determination to see at first hand what had taken place.

They, no doubt, came back with many different accounts. We do not know how many shepherds there were, but there were as many different reports as there were men to report on what they had seen. Tradition and temperament and the capacity to retain differ among men. One plays a game sometimes where many objects are put on a tray which is exhibited for a few minutes, and then the people in the room try to enumerate what they have seen. How different are the things people remember, and how few in number they usually are. It would have been interesting to hear the shepherds' accounts. Of one thing all would be sure, one point they would have in common – they had been there, they had seen him, they had personally witnessed and welcomed the Saviour.

Let us then make a pilgrimage of our own this Christmastime. Then let us bring back the reports of what we have "seen and heard" as did the shepherds. And if this causes us, as it did them, to "glorify and praise God," we will know that we have reached the heart of the Christmas experience. We have gone beyond the news to the event, and have made it our very own.

V

Finally, we are to make our report in terms of our lives. A report is to be made; let us have no doubt about that. One is not intended to keep quiet about what he has seen and heard in Bethlehem. The story is meant to be told. That is the nature of the gospel; it is good news, and Jesus said that his disciples should go into all the world and preach this gospel to every creature.

But it is meant to be told in a certain way. It is best told by being lived; by giving the account of what

as happened in and to one's own ie. And the telling of it will have uch to do with whether others want find it and love it for themselves. hrist will be winsome or unappeal-g according to our report of him, cording to the account we give of hat has happened when we were touch with him directly and face face.

We know that the "introducer" is very important element in our ex-rience. We can remember persons ho have opened the door and usher-us into new and joyous experi-ces. They have stepped aside, and ve often preferred to be forgotten, intent were they on having us ent-fully into the experience which ey opened before us. So we are the troducers of others to Christ. What e say about the experience will ve much to do with whether they sire to enter it, for themselves. The "good tidings" of this day will come from those who have experienced Christmas in their lives, who have felt its glow from first-hand contact with the Master, and who communicate that glow to the lives around them. That is the way Christianity has grown. Life after life has caught fire, and been consumed with love and loyalty for Christ. The nature of the report has been the thing that has persuaded men; the authentic testimony of those who have been where Jesus is, and speak of him as those who know him and love him and try to serve him.

Let us then get back of the Christmas news to the event itself. This is not something to hear about or read about — but to experience in one's heart. "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass."

HERE THE HIGHLANDS OF GOD MEET THE LOWLANDS OF IAN'S HIGHEST LONGING

Roy A. Burkhart, First Community Church, Columbus, Ohio

Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which has come to pass. Luke 2:15.

How moving it is to realize that the ng in the sky became the song in e heart and that the light of a star came the bright illumination of e mind.

Sir Walter Scott was once asked, Which is more beautiful, the high-nds of Scotland or the lowlands?" e thought a minute and then he nswered: "Neither. The most beauti-il scene in all Scotland is where the lendor of the highlands touches the ntleness of the lowland fields and stures." The answer is as suggestive s it is adroit and indeed a figure of ings human and eternal. In far-off ethlehem the vision divine touches e simplest, most natural things of fe; the mystic mountains of God lend with the most familiar plains of uman experience, and there results glory that forever casts it spell over the hearts of men and calls to them across the gray wastes of time. Where the highlands of God meet the lowlands of life — there is always Bethlehem.

The message of Christmas is that the abiding splendors of life are to be found in the hidden heart of simplicity; that the holy is ever an aspect of the homely; and that the mystery of the divine must be found in the mystery of the ordinary. Governmental edicts, tax collectors, census takers, a peasant family, a new born child; shepherds watching their flocks where for centuries shepherds had watched their flocks—this Christmas story of God's invading human life is a story of simple, lowly things. It's the story of a man and a woman coming at the end of a weary road to a little town on a darkened hill, where

they looked in vain for shelter at the door of a village inn, found a forlorn harborage in a stable, and there, in the dark of a winter's night, while the whole indifferent world outside slept uncaring, Mary's child was born. It is as though the spirit of the meaning of the universe had said: "I will not let you think that in some rare place and privilege life can find its fulfillment. Here is the lowliest place, in the commonest environment I come to dwell with you. Here and not elsewhere is Emmanuel." Let us see in what respects the highland of God comes on Christmas to the lowlands of man's highest aspirations.

I

Here is the exaltation of life's commonest, most fundamental virtues. The overtones of this story of Mary and Joseph coming to Bethlehem to be enrolled for taxation; the glory and surprise lingering about the crib of the first-born baby; the deepening integrity of family life; love and faithfulness and understanding illuminating the sacramental relationship of a lowly carpenter and his peasant wife; and above all these deep and simple things, the angel's song, the worship of wisemen. Surely the story is seeking to tell our hearts that God and all the meaning of life are to be found not in abstract speculations, not in notable movements in history, but only when we bring reverence, consecration, and insight to the common experiences of common life; and most of all when we determine to pillar life upon the homely vitrue of truth and love, of kindness and faith.

The great task of our souls is to preserve a saving simplicity in a complex world. In a highly organized society the tendency is so to complicate life that all elemental beauty and truth and goodness are lost in the vague and distant intermeshing relationships of collective living. Truth is not a virtue when one has an end to gain in dealing with a great corporation. "They do you if they can; do them if you can." When by a slight misstatment of fact we may attain the largess of government or escape its taxation, then virtue is cleverness and truth is success. In pressing for social change or political benefit, we have to use the tools that will be effective; we can't stop to be squeamish in matters of what we call morality. "Fight fire with fire." But from all such, God is very far off. The end of that moral relativity is the sheer secularization of society. We must catch the spirit of Bethlehem — the simple, undeceived and changeless principles of moral life — where truth is truth; where love is love; where virtue is not success but the high integrity of the soul; where life's rewards are not money and power, but the soul's apprehension of the song of God's angels and the shining of His Pilgrim star.

It is a simple fact that as life has become more complex and more aboundant in its material satisfactions, that is, as we have had more to eat and drink and more with which to clothe ourselves, the anxieties which cry "How shall we live?" have become steadily sharper and greater. It is not only the question of the poor; it is the cry of all those who do not have some inward trust and confidence. What is more, fears have not decreased as material security has increased. The man who is rich only in the things of this world has often more gnawing fears and is haunted by more terrors than the poor. And the very bitterness with which men today struggle for material possessions — the poor no less than the rich — is all an evidence of the false value people place upon material possessions. We think we can live by bread alone. But the very essence of virtue is the ability of a man to care for something above and beyond himself. Immoral life is governed by selfish, inward desires and passions; moral life is governed by an ideal at once inward and outward — a star calling and beckoning along the far horizons of life. It is this confusion of the sec-

dary with the essential that so com-
cates life and drains it of its peace
d stability. We garnish the frame
d neglect the picture; we have so
ch of that we can do without, we
so poor in that we are in need of.
That is the Christmas message. A
mily, which had none of the things
ich we so passionately pursue, had
mething through which God could
ke Himself known to the world —
th, love, faith, the deep simplic-
s of the soul. For a long time we
ve been pooling our moral ideals;
have made the mind of the mass
d the judgment of the crowd, the
y of our soul's decision. We must
eck our course. We must determine
all men forsake the homely virtues
d lowly integrities of life, yet we
ill not. Middleton Murray wrote an
teresting sentence: "The individual
nnot bear the responsibility of be-
g an individual. That is why we
ve the totalitarian state." He is
raid. He runs for refuge.

We need today an oncoming of
piritual power that will make life
mple and integrated and never sub-
ct to its external baggage. You re-
ember that little shed in the yard
the secondary school where Pierre
d Marie Curie worked because
ere was not room for them in the
eat laboratories of Paris. You know
e love and personal devotion that
as the undergirding of their com-
nionship. Can one forget Pierre
ing in the grassy meadow beside
arie in the last days of his short
fe, watching their children at play
nd turning to brush back the tresses
f her hair and saying, "Marie, life
as been sweet with you." We can't
rget their riding their bicycles in
e country to talk over whether they
ad the right to make any money out
f the discovery of radium, and decid-
ng in the negative. It was a true in-
ight of someone who referred to the
ude little laboratory of the Curies
s a "Scientific Bethlehem."

Out of little things, greatness is
nade; in simple things God waits to reveal His glory. That is the message of Christmas.

II

And then, too, Christmas tells us that God works in forces that men often overlook and despise; that the power of God is hidden in the weak things of the world. That is hard for us to understand, we who see blessedness in bigness and strength in coercion. Yet Bethlehem is God's everlasting witness to the fact that the things that are naught shall confound the things that are. Think of the legionnaires of Rome marching about the streets of Bethlehem that night; behind them was earth's mightiest empire, the embodiment of physical force; and in a manger a Babe was born who would live a few years, speak some words about life and God and love, and for his faith die upon a cross. Two systems of power met in everlasting conflict that starlit night. But Rome is dust, and Jesus lives and shall live beyond earth's latest nightfall.

Today we are confronted with the deification of crude and naked power. What chance have ideas and dreams and the quiet processes of spirit in a world like this? Little Bethlehem is submerged and overrun with Caesar's intoxicated soldiers. But today every dictator trembles lest some idea should get into the mind or some aspirations into the hearts of the people. That is why all newspapers and radio stations and even the talk of neighbors must be controlled and suppressed.

The tragic falsehood that even this recurring Christmas celebration cannot shake is that power is in the things that are external are noisy and blatant. Caesar and Herod ruled as ruthless tyrants among timorous millions. One tiny light, shining from a stable in Bethlehem! What is its meaning? A puff of wind and it is out! They believed that when Jesus was born; millions believe it today. Why did one shaggy-eyed shepherd run six miles to Jerusalem and awak-

en the rulers and cry, "Christ is born! A child is on Mary's heart that shall govern the world with a sceptre of mercy." Why did the wisemen elude Herod and go home another way? Because they knew no one would believe in the kind of power that was hidden in the heart of a child and was the sweet fragrance of a mother's dream.

But as silently as came the Holy Child, so still God works. He is to be found in the tiny molecular forces of life; the loyalty of one human heart to truth; the sacrifice of love in a world of cruelty; the yearning in human spirits for something better than that which is. I know that Holy Child was crucified by the power of men. But the victory was with the victim. They did not crucify him because they were human, but because they were not human enough. They bowed to the power of the sword rather than to love and kindness and the truly human things.

Yes, as silently as Jesus was born, save for his mother's cry, so he still works in human life and history. I read somewhere that in 1809 there was a time of dictatorship when days were darker and more threatening than now. There seemed no hope for human freedom. The historians say some decisive battles were fought that defeated Napoleon. But one asks, "What about the decisive battles in the year of 1809?" Lincoln, the emancipator; Gladstone, the defender of liberty; Mendelssohn to give heavenly expression to the mystery of beauty just beyond the touch of time; Darwin to shake the world with a sublime sense of the infinite processes of life; Oliver Wendell Holmes crying to the soul to build itself "more stately mansions, leaving its shell by time's unresting sea" — all these men were born in 1809. And who can measure the far-reaching influence of the contributions they made?

Somewhere today the spirit of God is working. Jesus is born in Bethlehem. And good men and wise men will search for the evidence of God's new and quiet invasion of life and history.

III

Finally, Christmas teaches us that God is found in childhood, and to know Him we must recapture the nature of a child's heart; his wide-eyed wonder; his capacity for adventure and growth; his everlasting questioning of life. At Christmas we seek to escape our sophistication and mean worldliness and see life through a child's eyes and feel life with a child's heart. We seek some elemental simplicity of attitude that has been lost while "shades of a prison house closed upon our souls."

Let us now go to Bethlehem and see. "Except ye become as a little child ye cannot see." All about us in the common experience and lowly life is that which should excite our wonder and reverence — the faith and love that makes our homes; the hope that saves weary and world-broken hearts from despair; the red mystery of the sunrise, the tender blue of winter skies; the little song there is at the heart of sorrow; the everlasting love of a Heavenly Father. Life is not measured by the number of breaths taken, but by the number not taken — in other words, by its breath-taking amazements. Life is measured by intensity of experience and not by extension of time. A child dancing by a Christmas tree, gay with lights and ribbons and tinsel, represents life at its simple depths — life which many of us have lost and must find again.

Some words I read the other day have been singing in my soul. "God places in our midst the thing that is most precious to Him in all the starry universe — a tiny morsel of human life — and promises us the heaven of His approving love if we will reverence it as the simple shepherds did and serve it as the wisemen did who, though following a star, turned their eyes downward from that unearthly brightness and looked upon a tiny

rth-born child, hailed him as King, d knelt down and poured out treas- es before the littlest and meekest ing in all the world." What is any- ing else worth if we keep not a thful watch around the cradle of child, if we keep not disease and verty from that child lying there its mother's arms? Apart from this, ience and learning and government d religion are nothing. The Child's d would come again in every child and make each human home a Bethlehem.

God in the commonplace, the manger things of life; God working in quiet, unseen ways of spirit; the eternal in the heart of a child — these are the realities of life when the highlands of God meet the lowlands of man. This is the world-redeeming message of Christmas. To know and to live it is the supreme challenge and hope of the world.

D'S CHRISTMAS LIST

Peter H. Pleune, Highland Presbyterian Church, Louisville, Kentucky

God so loved the world that he gave. John 3:16.

The Christmas story is the greatest ry ever told. Its sentiment wraps lf around every human heart. mong the writings of almost every thor there is one story with the ristmas theme. Writers of adven- re, fiction, romance, even humor- s, have almost every one made at ast one serious effort to enshrine mething of the glory, the beauty d the eternal tenderness of the ristmas story. But the Bible, of urse, surpasses them all, for it is e source of them all. All the drama, e adventure, the romance, and the ntiment of life are in the story told a humble couple in a stable, a new rn babe in the manger, with a ckground of shepherds drawn to- ther to build their watch fires on Judean hill. In the further distance e wise men from afar, and overhead shining star, and an angel host sing- g of peace on earth to men of good ill.

But back of that story is the author it. For the Christmas story is the velation of the heart of God. But t a heart, once tender and thought- l, back there in old Judea, not yet ntimentally warmed toward man- ind only once every year, in the cold ays of each December, but a God ternally and lovingly mindful of His hildren, a God who so loved the orld that He gave — and continues give.

I find that I am always helped in my understanding of God when I use my imagination about Him, when I think of Him as a Father, a word He used about Himself. And doing that it has more meaning for me when I take the very best I know about human fatherhood, and even turn over in my thought my own deep and moving reactions toward my own child. Then it is that God's fatherhood opens up for me. I am His child, and He is my Father, with love, patience, trust, justice, understanding, courage, sacrifice, and all of it in His fatherhood never varying or faltering as it does in my own.

As I think today of God as a father, it takes only a little of my imagination to think of Him as a father with a Christmas list in His hand. Then why not imagine a little more, that somehow or other I have had an opportunity to look at that list and to discover that there for me and for you, and for everybody else, for we are all His children, are listed the gifts He has planned to give us.

What kind of things do you think are on that list for us? Things, most of them, with the same general characteristics as the gifts we give. There are things that are essentials, everyday things with no glamour about them, so accustomed have we become to their place in our lives. Everyday necessities are on that list. But there

are things there, too, that we could do without. They are life's extras, things that are decorative, light, frivolous things, some of them, even humorous, for God knows we have need of that too. And on this list are things of life and death, and things for each of us alone, and things for all of us to enjoy together.

I

I am impressed by the number of things on that list that are for everyone. These are grouped together under the one word "life." How we do take life for granted! Yet it is God's gift. We can learn from the little girl who used in the Lord's Prayer, as children will sometimes, a wrong word which at the same time was a right one. She always prayed, "Give us this day our daily breath." Sunshine is listed there, and rain, and cloud, light and darkness, harvest and toil, beauty and fragrance of field and forest, water in springs and rivers and the wide sea, laughter for little children and joy for grownups. They are listed under the one word "life."

I saw there too the word "peace." I remembered that this was the theme of the angel song on the first Christmas. And still the Father comes with His gift of peace for the world. Christmas does strangely beautiful things to us all, and one of them is that it makes goodwill seem so near, and so reasonable. During the last war, amid all its brutalities, the coming of Christmas brought momentary peace to the trenches. Guns were silenced while on both sides soldiers rigged up makeshift Christmas trees, sang carols, and even exchanged gifts with their foes — until the officers put a stop to it. But the logic of the officers was correct. If the war was to go on this Christmas business must be stopped. Mankind seems to be far from peaceful. Yet peace is on God's Christmas list for the world. It is an actual gift for us, only we take it and call it pretty, and lay it aside to take up our toys of soldiers and guns and airplanes. But the gift isn't just pretty and impractical. Surely we ought to recognize that we have never seriously tried to do anything with it. I wonder what God thinks about us as each year we take this gift and admire it for a day, and then lay it away on the back of some shelf! It is a gift we have never used. George Bernard Shaw rightly said: "If there is to be peace, nations must adopt some such policy as Jesus Christ would propose if He were a modern statesman."

Also among the gifts for all mankind I saw the word "hope." I was glad of that, for the strife of men has dimmed our hopes for the future. Many of us have been picturing a dark, desolate world just around the corner. And that word "hope" in connection with Christmas brought to mind the dark hopeless years when the scourge of Napoleon's might was spread across the world. The future was black indeed, and yet in the very heart of those years, "In the one year of 1809 Mr. Gladstone was born, and Alfred Tennyson, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Charles Darwin in old England, and Abraham Lincoln in old Kentucky, Frederic Chopin in Warsaw and Felix Mendelssohn in Hamburg, and Elizabeth Barret Browning in England. Everybody was thinking of battles. But which of the battles of those next years mattered as much for the world as the babies of 1809. In the next year Thackeray, Dickens, Robert Browning and David Livingstone were born. When a wrong wants righting, or a work wants doing, or a truth wants preaching, or a continent wants opening, God sends a baby into the world to do it. That is why long, long ago a babe was born at Bethlehem." And across the world today there are Christmas babies coming into life, the hope and the promise of tomorrow. Still there is hope. It is on God's Christmas list for His world.

There is one word on that list of things for everyone that is written

ger than all the rest. It is the word vior. It is that word which was the ntral theme of the angel message, here is born to you this day in the y of David a Savior who is Christ e Lord." That Savior is a gift. We nnot buy a Savior or earn a Savior. e is God's gift to us. A moment o we said that among the gifts on od's Christmas list were things of e and death. And the Savior is that nd of a gift. He is on the list for eryone, but again He also is too ten the kind of a gift we look at miringly and lay aside for future e. No one ought to be sad at Christas time, but I wonder if the Father n't often sad on Christmas Day hen Christ comes to His own and is own know Him not!

II

But gifts are listed here not just r everyone alike, but particular gifts r individual people. One of you is ing most tempted and tried. Your me is written here. He knows all out the battles you've had, the few ctories and the frequent disastrous feats. He knows — that is one point His remembrance of you particurly. The other is His hand outretched, not to hold you in restraint, t for you to hold on to until you me through. And you who are disartened and discouraged, your me is written here. Creeping over u has come the thought that you n't count anymore for anything, at you are scarcely needed by anye. It has been taking its toll of you. has been sapping away your joy f living, for no one can long endure e thought, "They could get along st as well without me." That is ue of no one. God has also marked own for you the gift of the spirit of ving. You were made in the image f God, whose glory is the giving f Himself. It is a God-given blessing r us to share our lives as He shares is. A lighthouse keeper, who lived lone on a desolate reef, was asked, Don't you find it lonely here?" He nswered, "I used to, until I saved my first man." A sense of your own worth is God's gift for you if you will try giving yourself.

And there are the names here of those upon whose hearts sadness has come, for whom loss has come and heartache. Opposite your name is written comfort and assurance. It is hard for you, of course, to sing "Joy to the world! the Lord is come." For He has come and He has taken your joy away. All about you is brightness and gladness, glittering lights and laughter, and a joy that you have known but now miss terribly. Your heaviness is even increased by contrast. You will be glad when all that spells Christmas is past. Ah, but that is just what the great Father has marked down for you — Christmas. If there were no Christmas! Then there would be no resurrection morning. Desolation indeed for your heart if the Christmas Lord has not come. So you must purpose to build your watch fire as the shepherds did, and the angel of the Lord will come to you and the glory of the Lord will shine about you. The voice of the angel will say, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all peoples." Sing it, my friend, even if under your breath — for you especially is it true, "Joy to the world! the Lord is come."

There are other names on this list and other things for them. For you, my brother, there is God's gift of patience for your discontent. And for you, strength for your weakness. And for you humility for your pride. For you courage for your fears. For you love for your hate. For you and you and you and for me pardon for our sins. It is all here on God's Christmas list for us. It is here with your name opposite the gift you most need. It is a long, long number of things that God has on His list for us. He has made out His list, even as we do our little ones, so that He won't forget.

III

But that is not all of the list. What

about the things He has marked down, even as we do of the things we need and would like to receive? What of His hopes for some things from us? They are not so many as the things He has marked down for us, but the things He wants from us are crucially important to Him, and for us, too. One thing is there — gratitude! Honest, wholehearted appreciation that He is our Father, not fear or fawning, but the kind of love and respect we want from our own children. He wants to be a part of our Christmas, not just an onlooker. The Christmas story has made much of the gifts of the wise men to the Lord of Bethlehem, but don't forget the shepherds, humble, unknown, unlearned, who brought the love and gratitude of their hearts to lay at His feet. "For the gift without the giver is bare." And so the Lord of life, Giver of every good and perfect gift, has written down on His Christmas list His longing, yearning hope that He may receive from each of us our heart, and will, and soul — that we may give ourselves to Him.

This is a time of Christmas lists. You have made out your own list of things you are to give. God has made out His. You are on God's list, you may be sure of that. Is He on yours?

THERE COMES TO US — A TRAVELER!

Everett W. Palmer, First Methodist Church, Glendale, California

And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. Luke 2:7.

It's an old, old story. It happened long ago and far away. But it haunts our hearts with an aching tenderness and, on occasion, a stabbing uneasiness. We cannot escape it. We wouldn't if we could.

It is night. A man is trudging under the stars. A tired donkey plods at his side. On the donkey is a young woman, body bent by fatigue, face grey with weariness. For them it's journey's end, and none too soon.

They stop outside an inn, the only refuge for travelers that night. The man pauses to comfort his wife and then strides to the door. Light floods out with a babel of sound as he opens the door. He enters. The door closes and there is darkness and stillness in the courtyard where the woman waits, waits with the donkey under the far-shining stars, waits with mingled hope and fear in her heart.

The innkeeper looks up at the tired, distraught traveler. "Sorry," he says, "no room."

"But, sir," the man pleads, "we have traveled many days by order of Caesar, all the way from Nazareth. My wife must have shelter and rest for the night. She is soon to be a mother, sir."

A Roman official sitting nearby listens, raises an eyebrow, then returns to conversation with his friends. A merchant overhears the plea. He merely shrugs, mutters in his beard, and goes off to bed.

"Sorry, no room, we are crowded out," the man repeats and, turning away to serve another guest, leaves Joseph standing there.

But I like to think as Joseph sags and blindly makes his way toward the door, a servant of the innkeeper catches his arm and says, "Friend, I know how it is, but the man is right. This place is crowded, really packed out. There is not a vacant room in town. . . Say, wait a minute. . . Now, if your wife won't mind, I know where I can fix up a place. I can make it clean. You will have it quiet there. It will be warm, too."

So it was that Mary, queen of women, "gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the

." So the Prince of Heaven was
eived among us mortals here on
th.

I

t's an old, old story. It happened
g ago and far away. But we can-
escape it because we're in the
y, too.
es, it is as old as despair and our
ger for hope, old as sin and our
for deliverance, old as darkness
our quest for light, old as death
our right to life. It is the human
y, the eternal parable of the soul,
n yours and mine. While we
ch, Bethlehem becomes our home
n; the innkeeper becomes you
me; and out of the night there
es to us a traveler!
What will we do with Him? To ask
h a question is to be reminded
consequences. What occurs when
rist is crowded out? What hap-
s when the blunder of the ancient
keper is corrected?
Charles Dickens in his immortal
ristmas Carol" gives the classic
wer. Ebnezer Scrooge thought he
s a most virtuous man. Wasn't he
king his business prosper? Didn't
give employment to people need-
work? Didn't he pay his bills?
sn't he a prosperous and honest
n? Really, one could make out
te a good case for Mr. Scrooge,
ept for his one oversight. He nev-
thought of making advance reser-
ions for a Traveler. So, without
liberate intention, he never had
m for Christ and always sent Him
the stable. He crowded out the
ims of Christ with the claims of
business.
He became, unknowingly, a black
shriveled soul. So he nurtured
hin his breast, without conscious
nt, the seeds of strife and men's
ery.
But when the ghost of Jacob Mor-
, his former skinflint partner, fin-
ed its work, and Scrooge flung
n the doors of his heart to the
rit of Jesus, what a change was
ought! What a new man he be-
came! What a different world he helped make for others!

"He came unto his own," wrote John, "and his own received him not. But to such as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God."

II

When we reserve a place, the first and honored place in our hearts, for the Christ at Christmas something marvelous happens. Resentments which have corroded our spirit are replaced with a healing forgiveness. Fears which has sapped our strength are overcome with sturdy faith. Habits of conduct which have degraded us and hurt others are broken and we are set free. Inner conflict is resolved into harmony. Purity overcomes lust. Weakness becomes strength. Troubles, handicaps, sorrows, and calamities are transmuted into wisdom and virtue. New life is begun! Christmas, blessed Christmas, becomes the permanent possession of our hearts and grows in the world.

Really, you didn't need to hear a preacher today. The carols we have sung, the wondrous music of the organ and human voices; the Christmas story we have heard; the holy beauty of this candle-lighted sanctuary — all have been saying to us: "Make room in your heart for the Christmas Traveler. Cultivate the habits which reserve the place of honor in your life for Him. Give first place in your thoughts, your love, your possesions, and your toil to Him and what He came to do in the world."

Has anyone been crowding Him out? Look now at the guests which you have allowed in His place. Does one deserve it?

Is there anyone who once knew the sweet peace and conquering strength of His presence, but gradually has lost it?

Is there anyone who has never given hospitality to Christ? A youth who wants to begin serving the King of Kings; someone older who wants to give what is left of life to the

Lord of Life?

He is here now, within the courtyard of every heart, and there is a gentle knocking at the door.

SYMBOLS OF FAITH: (Continued from Page

in the Peking area. During the fourth year of his work, he set three months aside to walk seven hundred of nine hundred miles to meet and marry a new missionary teacher who had given up a successful editorship of a popular woman's magazine. When he arrived in Shanghai, he impatiently asked, "Where is she?" referring to Miss Susan M. Waring, the beautiful American writer whom he had never met!

In her narrative Miss Wood says, "Unfortunately, there is no record of what he said to Susan when they met that night, but whatever it was, it worked. He returned to Peking in less than three months with the glamorous Miss Waring as his wife."

His life in Peking was filled with work — translating and later administering Christian activities as Bishop of Shanghai. Even after he suffered a paralysis in his legs and arms, his work during the next twenty years included the revision of the Old Testament translation in Mandarin, a new translation in the popular Easy Wenli language, completion of reference Bibles in both languages, and the beginnings of a Mongolian dictionary. Most of the time he was able to use only the middle finger of his right hand for typing, a fact which gave the title "One-finger Bible" to the Easy Wenli translation. Part of the work, however, was done on his "bad days," when he grasped a pencil in his fist and tapped the typewriter keys as might a determined child with his toy.

Stories like this one of Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky make many of us more grateful than ever for the translating of the Bible into eleven hundred tongues, that it might be helpful as a light for the paths of the children of men.

(The illustration at the head of this column is reproduced from page 28 of Mr. Rest's valuable and absorbing book **Our Christian Symbols,** published by the Christian Education Press, Philadelphia, and reprinted by permission.—The Editor)

WORTH QUOTING (Continued from page 19)

communication is achieved through the limiting structure of spoken and written language."

Rae Noel

* * *

The glory of life is in its expectancy. Marmout said of Napoleon, "There is so much future in his mind." It has been characteristic of great souls, such as Paul, who have had a far nobler future than Napoleon's in their minds.

Halford Luccock

* * *

The way in which Jesus voluntarily went to his death is the most convincing sort of evidence that death does not have the last word. The cross is the true symbol of our hope. It signifies the quality of his life.

George A. Coe

* * *

Biography opens the door and permits another life to enter our own. Foolish is the person who fails to live with the towering figures of history. And the nobler the characters with whom we dwell the finer will be the quality of our own thinking.

Kirby Page

* * *

If a person is tired out, he has not the vigor demanded for serious thinking. He will almost invariably do the easiest thing. Let us make it unmistakably clear to ourselves that no **fagged** man can be at his best.

Henry Churchill King